

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A system for managing local control of access to a computer network,
2 comprising:
3 an access point having an operating system and access control software;
4 wherein the access control software is configured to receive an access code
5 from a client and authenticate the client using the access code;
6 wherein the operating system is configured to allow a communication session
7 to be established between the client and the computer network upon the client being
8 successfully authenticated by the access control software; and
9 wherein the access control software is further configured to meter and rate the
10 communication session.

1 2. The system of claim 1 wherein the access point is further configured to
2 manage access with respect to one or more communication sessions.

1 3. The system of claim 1 wherein one or more methods are available for
2 use by the access control software to meter and rate the communication session.

1 4. The system of claim 3 wherein one of the one or more methods uses
2 information from a website being visited to meter and rate the communication session.

1 5. The system of claim 3 wherein the access control software uses
2 information specified by an operator of the access point to select at least one of the one or
3 more methods to be used to meter and rate the communication session.

1 6. The system of claim 3 wherein the access control software selects at
2 least one of the one or more methods to be used to meter and rate the communication session
3 by using information associated with the access code.

1 7. The system of claim 1 wherein the access control software is further
2 configured to meter and rate the communication session in real time.

1 8. The system of claim 1 wherein one or more access codes are generated
2 based on the information specified by an operator.

1 9. The system of claim 1 wherein the access control software is capable
2 of being activated by the operator.

1 10. The system of claim 1 wherein the access control software is further
2 configured to terminate the communication session between the client and the computer
3 network when a usage limit is reached.

1 11. The system of claim 10 wherein the access control software is further
2 configured to inform the client when the client approaches the usage limit for the
3 communication session.

1 12. The system of claim 5 wherein the information specified by the
2 operator includes parameters governing usage and access conditions for the access point.

1 13. The system of claim 12 wherein information associated with the access
2 code includes at least one of the parameters governing usage and access conditions for the
3 access point.

1 14. The system of claim 12 wherein the parameters include at least one of
2 maximum session time, maximum data volume, the one or more methods that are available to
3 meter and rate the communication session and access conditions including time period
4 restrictions and restrictions on number of clients.

1 15. The system of claim 1 further comprising:
2 a control server having control server software, wherein the control server is
3 configured to communicate with the access point.

1 16. The system of claim 15 wherein one or more access codes are
2 generated by the control server software and forwarded to the access point.

1 17. The system of claim 15 wherein the control server is further configured
2 to communicate with one or more access points.

1 18. The system of claim 15 wherein the control server software is further
2 configured to carry out a process to initialize an account for an operator of the access point.

1 19. The system of claim 18 wherein during the account initialization
2 process, either the operator or the access control software or both provide information
3 including identification information and billing information to the control server software.

1 20. The system of claim 18 wherein either the operator or the access
2 control software or both provide information to the control server software that is to be used
3 by the access control software to meter and rate one or more communication sessions.

1 21. The system of claim 20 wherein the control server software allows the
2 operator to change the specified information.

1 22. The system of claim 20 wherein the control server software is further
2 configured to generate one or more access codes using the information specified by the
3 operator.

1 23. The system of claim 8 wherein at least one of the one or more access
2 codes is subject to one or more restrictions.

1 24. The system of claim 23 wherein the one or more restrictions include a
2 one-time use.

1 25. The system of claim 15 wherein the control server software is further
2 configured to process end-user payment information received from the access control
3 software.

1 26. The system of claim 15 wherein the control server software is further
2 configured to receive one or more requests from the access control software to generate
3 corresponding access codes.

1 27. The system of claim 26 wherein the control server software is further
2 configured to track information relating to the one or more requests from the access control
3 software and other activities incurred by the access point.

1 28. The system of claim 27 wherein the control server software is further
2 configured to report the tracked information to the operator.

1 29. The system of claim 27 wherein the control server software is further
2 configured to generate a bill to the operator based on the tracked information.

1 30. The system of claim 1 wherein the access point is a router.

1 31. The system of claim 1 wherein the access code is provided to the
2 access point by the client via wireless communications.

1 32. A system for managing local control of access to a computer network,
2 comprising:
3 a plurality of access points, each access point configured to receive a plurality
4 of access codes from a plurality of clients and authenticate the plurality of clients using the
5 corresponding access codes, each access point further configured to provide a service to a
6 client based on the client's corresponding access code, the service including establishing a
7 communication session between the client and the computer network upon the client being
8 successfully authenticated by the access point; and
9 a control server configured to communicate with the plurality of access points,
10 the control server further configured to generate the corresponding access codes for the
11 plurality of clients and forward the corresponding access codes to the plurality of access
12 points.

1 33. The system of claim 32 wherein a first access point is further
2 configured to meter and rate the communication session for the client using the client's access
3 code.

1 34. The system of claim 33 wherein one or more methods are available for
2 use by the first access point to meter and rate the communication session.

1 35. The system of claim 34 wherein one of the one or more methods uses
2 information from a website being visited to meter and rate the communication session.

1 36. The system of claim 34 wherein the first access point uses information
2 associated with the client's access code to select at least one of the one or more methods to be
3 used to meter and rate the communication session.

1 37. The system of claim 33 wherein the control server generates one or
2 more access codes for the client seeking access via the first access point based on information
3 specified by an operator of the first access point.

1 38. The system of claim 37 wherein the information specified by the
2 operator includes parameters governing usage and access conditions for the first access point.

1 39. The system of claim 38 wherein information associated with at least
2 one of the one or more access codes for the client includes at least one of the parameters
3 governing usage and access conditions for the first access point.

1 40. The system of claim 38 wherein the parameters include at least one of
2 maximum session time, maximum data volume, one or more methods that are available to
3 meter and rate the communication session and access conditions including time period
4 restrictions and restrictions on number of clients.

1 41. The system of claim 33 wherein the first access point is further
2 configured to meter and rate the communication session for the client in real time.

1 42. The system of claim 33 wherein the first access point is further
2 configured to terminate the communication session between the client and the computer
3 network when a usage limit is reached.

1 43. The system of claim 33 wherein the first access point is further
2 configured to inform the client when the client approaches the usage limit for the
3 communication session.

1 44. The system of claim 32 wherein the control server is further configured
2 to carry out a process to initialize an accountfor an operator of a first access point.

1 45. The system of claim 44 wherein during the account initialization
2 process, either the operator or the first access point or both provide information including
3 identification and billing information to the control server.

1 46. The system of claim 44 wherein either the operator or the first access
2 point or both provide information to the control server, the information provided to the

3 control server is to be used to provide the service including metering and rating the
4 communication session.

1 47. The system of claim 46 wherein the control server allows the operator
2 to change the specified information.

1 48. The system of claim 46 wherein the control server is further configured
2 to generate one or more access codes for a client using the information specified by the
3 operator.

1 49. The system of claim 32 wherein at least one of the plurality of access
2 codes is subject to one or more restrictions.

1 50. The system of claim 49 wherein the one or more restrictions include a
2 one-time use.

1 51. The system of claim 32 wherein the control server is further configured
2 to process end-user payment information received from one or more of the plurality of access
3 points.

1 52. The system of claim 32 wherein the control server is further configured
2 to receive a plurality of requests from the plurality of access points to generate corresponding
3 access codes.

1 53. The system of claim 52 wherein the control server is further configured
2 to track information relating to the plurality of requests from the plurality of access points
3 and other activities incurred by the plurality of access points.

1 54. The system of claim 53 wherein the control server is further configured
2 to report the tracked information to corresponding operators of the plurality of access points.

1 55. The system of claim 53 wherein the control server is further configured
2 to generate bills to corresponding operators of the plurality of access points based on the
3 tracked information.

1 56. The system of claim 32 wherein the plurality of access points include a
2 router.

1 57. The system of claim 32 wherein at least one of the plurality of access
2 points communicates with the plurality of clients via wireless communications.